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Building the future of work together

What will the workplace of the future look like?

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Hybrid: when it comes to the post-Covid world of work, that's the buzzword on everyone's lips. Hybrid work, hybrid workplaces, hybrid teams...

It is well documented that the pandemic has resulted in the double-digit growth of remote working. By choice or by constraints due to lockdowns. According to different but consistent surveys, at least 50% of workers expect to keep on working partly from home in the future and this is being acknowledged by 72% of leaders¹.

So what will the new, hybrid workplace look like? It will offer a flexible way of working comprising the possibility to be both physically present in the corporate office and to work remotely on-line in a distributed manner, leveraging cloud technologies. In summary, it will be multi-space, customised, touchless (as much as possible) and collaborative/interactive.

The New Normal office will be multi-space, combining an articulation of three different places: the corporate office (the "basecamp" of the company), the home office and third-party workplaces. This last one could be a dedicated coworking space (there are already 14,000 coworking spaces around the world), a fablab, a coffee shop or an airport lounge, but also an hotel room (it is increasingly possible to book a room for daytime use); this latter option will give people access to a private, comfortable, quiet and well-connected working space. However, within this hybrid work model, the corporate office will remain the centre of the work ecosystem. As the basecamp, it will represent the heart and soul of the company, the place where employees will come for social interaction, where the corporate culture and values can be promoted and lived. It will remain an essential factor for the cohesion of the company.

There will be a need to decouple traditional work and workstyles from the corporate office. Hybrid work will be the answer to providing greater employee choice, so they can customise the way in which they work. Indeed, the different workplace expectations of workers must be

¹ Source: Steelcase, JLL

recognised and taken into account. While 24% want to work exclusively from the office, 50% are asking for a hybrid approach and 26% would prefer to work exclusively outside of the office.²

Clearly, going to the corporate office still affords many advantages: to manage or be supported by management, to work in a collaborative way and run meetings, to access on-site resources (IT, printers, meeting rooms to welcome clients, access to amenities). But for certain people, home might be seen as a quieter and more comfortable office, especially if you don't have young kids playing around! And when it comes to learning and growing or to socialising, third-party coworking spaces are sometimes better placed to deliver. They offer the possibility to exchange with peers and/or experts working on similar projects for other employers or customers. 43% of workers would find the possibility to work from a coworking facility close to their home appealing (and 6% already benefit from this option)³.


So, the location that we are working from will be related to the tasks we have to perform, and might change during the day! That means that the workplace has to be customised to the needs of the employee and offer different solutions to meet a diversity of work situations and types. Companies will have to adapt to these new requirements and expectations, especially if they want to attract and retain the best talent!

In the same way that many companies are already offering luncheon vouchers to their employees, the next step might be for employers to offer office vouchers, so that employees can pick and choose the third-party places that they want to work from.

In addition to becoming multi-spaced and customised, the new office will have to be as touchless as possible. In recent years, companies have developed frictionless workplaces relying on touch technology – kiosks that require navigation via touch, conference room booking screens outside of the door, sign-in tablets and even biometric fingerprint scans. In the wake of the Covid pandemic and other viral threats all of these conveniences start to look like health risks! As much as possible, the workplace of the future should include automatic soap dispensers, touchless trashcans, automatic doors, facial recognition and voice control tools in order to avoid the spread of germs through community and shared devices. And the way in which people circulate within the office should also be designed to avoid any unnecessary crossover while maintaining a certain level of fluidity within the office.

Finally, we should question why people are being asked to come back to the office. If the main reason for commuting several hours a day is just to sit at a desk in front of a computer, it does not make sense! The new workplace must facilitate interactive and collaborative work, offering brainstorming/idea creation spaces, readily available meeting rooms, facilities to promote teamwork, amenities to meet socially and flexible desk policies to avoid silos. The motto here is aiming at being better together! That means that the corporate office should become the best place to work collectively and that people should be excited to come back to the office.

Office sweet office, or coming back to a familiar, welcoming, cosy workspace!

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² JLL – Reimagining Human experience – November 2020

³ JLL – Reimagining Human experience – November 2020